

How to “Book Fair”: A New Librarian’s trip to the #FILGDL2015

The FIL (pronounced: “feel”), or *Feria Internacional de Libro* de Guadalajara (Guadalajara International Book Fair), is a “must go” for any librarian building a collection of Spanish-language materials. It is the largest annual Spanish-language book fair in the Western Hemisphere. At the fair, you will have access to academic, independent, and commercial publishers, networking with colleagues who do the same work you do, and Spanish-language materials from all over the world, at all reading levels, on topics ranging from general to specific interests. This article follows a previous WESS Newsletter article titled, “[From Coast to Coast: A New Librarian’s Summer of Professional Development](#).” In that article, I mentioned some of the ways I had been preparing to attend the book fair in Mexico. The fair took place November 28 - December 5, 2015, with three Professional Days, or [días con horario exclusivo para profesionales](#), during which librarians and book distributors could work unimpeded by the public. In this article, I will give an overview of the preparations, attendance, and results of attending a book fair. There’s not one way to *feriar*, or “book fair,” so you should consider what works for your local context and personal abilities.

It’s worth noting the American Library Association’s ALA-FIL FREE PASS Program is open for registration for 2016 with a September 2 deadline. According to their [website](#), “The Guadalajara Book Fair is offering an additional \$100 to the first 100 applicants who submit their airfare confirmation by October 2nd.” Both the ALA and the FIL offer a \$100 reimbursement, for a total of \$200, providing you meet the deadlines and criteria. The FIL also has a robust [website](#), available in English, that you should review before attending. Note you don’t have to speak Spanish to attend, but you will most likely rely on your colleagues and perhaps a distributor who do.

I’ll discuss the following:

- Making your Case
- Before leaving the US
- Orientations
- Working with a distributor
- Attending: shopping, navigating, and using technology
- Shipping materials & returning to the US

MAKING YOUR CASE

In the digital age, attending a book fair in another country may be perceived by your library’s administration or colleagues as unnecessary: “Can’t you just order these books online?” Fortunately for me, that is not the case at my institution, despite the trend of my library moving toward a more Patron-Driven Acquisition (PDA) model (which assumes that books will be available when the patron realizes they want them. Spanish-language materials, given limited print runs and other constraints, are not easily available online). Given your local situation, you may have to advocate for attending the book fair by mentioning benefits like access to limited print runs and small and independent publishers. Brushing up on persuasion

techniques, like I mentioned in my first article, could be helpful. Additionally, you may have to make the case why attending the book fair is cost-effective.

Fortunately, a generous colleague of mine in SALALM (Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials) had already crunched the numbers and was willing to share that information with me so I could show the Head of Acquisitions at my institution. My colleague had compared how much it would cost to buy the books at retail in the US from a distributor versus travel expenses, purchases, and shipping costs in a do-it-yourself, or DIY, model. He found that it was significantly cheaper for him to go to the FIL and purchase and ship the books himself, given the large volume of materials he is able to purchase. He also noted that a large portion of what he bought was unique to his library in his state (around 90% of titles!) according to an examination of other libraries' holdings via WorldCat. Unique titles in a sense are priceless because they add a richness and depth to not only your library's collection, but the whole Interlibrary Loan landscape.

To be clear, the FIL is a professional development activity. As another SALALM colleague put it, "it's impossible not to get professional development at the FIL." If your library requires information about the program and sessions, check out the [Training for Professionals](#) page, as well as last year's programming: [FIL 2015 Program](#). There were many events, including talks by famous authors (Salman Rushdie, for example) and the [OMT-FIL Translators Congress](#). Also, keep in mind the networking possibilities and relationships you will make with vendors and publishers. Even if you buy nothing, my colleague says, attending the FIL is useful because you learn about the publishing industry in ways you cannot at your desk. I found this to be true (even though I ended up buying a lot).

Beyond professional development, Guadalajara and its surroundings are a wonderful place to be a tourist. The nearby cities of Tlaquepaque and Tonalá are located in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area and have shops, vendors, and market days (you will need to join a tour or rent a car to get to these places). Within the city, there are plenty of historical and cultural sites. The city's murals, by José Clemente Orozco and David Alvaro Siqueiros, are captivating. If you go beyond the city, you could visit a tequila distillery or the Guachimontones ruins with its fascinating circular stepped pyramids (and connection to the *Voladores de Papantla*, who you might see performing in Tlaquepaque). The language and culture immersion can only make you a better librarian and resource to your community and students.



Image 1: SALALM Colleagues on a tour of the Tres Mujeres Distillery

BEFORE LEAVING THE US

I began my preparations with my library's acquisitions department and fiscal officer. We discussed my budget, sales tax, currency conversion, and the possibility of working with a distributor. My library wanted to receive all books on one invoice, so that necessitated working with a distributor. Without one, I would have had to pay each vendor individually in cash and receive all manner of invoices, including some handwritten ones. Regarding currency, there are several ATMs located in or near the Expo Guadalajara conventions facility; however, I'm told they have a withdrawal limit of \$300 USD per day and have been known to run out of cash. All of your purchases will be made in Mexican pesos; some vendors take credit cards. If you plan to spend a lot of money, I recommend getting currency from a bank in the US prior to travel and taking common safety precautions (the book fair gets really crowded!). A SALALM colleague of mine takes tax-exempt forms with her for vendors to fill out in order to do business with them later by mail.

A distributor will purchase your selected titles and ship them to your library along with an invoice with their markup on the prices. Receiving an invoice from only one company may be a benefit to your organization as was the case with mine, but you should also take into consideration what services the distributor provides, what their turnaround time is for shipping, and what their markup is on the price of the books. They may only provide you a rough estimate of the markup. Postage may also be a separate charge. Distributors often negotiate a price lower than the *feria* or special book fair price, so their markup will be some percentage on top of a price to which you may not be privy. The discount varies by vendor and their relationship to your distributor. My SALALM colleagues recommended various distributors to me and suggested I speak on the phone with a few of them before deciding with whom to work.

I also prepared to attend the FIL by getting to know the areas of interest of the Spanish Program faculty at my institution. I created a survey on what types of materials and content they preferred in order to delve deeper than the information that is available via their faculty profiles. I attended a faculty meeting, described the book fair, and handed out fliers with the

link to the survey. They were enthusiastic about my endeavor, and their responses influenced which country and vendor/publisher stands I visited.



Image 2: Universidad de Guadalajara stand

ORIENTATIONS

As I mentioned in my fall article, Adan Griego led the Spanish portion of the Area Studies Workshop in San Francisco last summer that provided a lot of background information on the publishing industry and market for Spanish-language library materials in the US. He is the Curator for Latin American, Mexican-American and Iberian Collections at the Stanford University Libraries, and a colleague of mine in SALALM who first began attending book fairs in 1992. In his post, [Attending Book Fairs: Why It Matters](#), he mentions several important considerations for attending book fairs, including access to limited print runs, or *tirajes*, of sometimes only 250-500 copies. See photo, below, for an example of what to look for in a book:

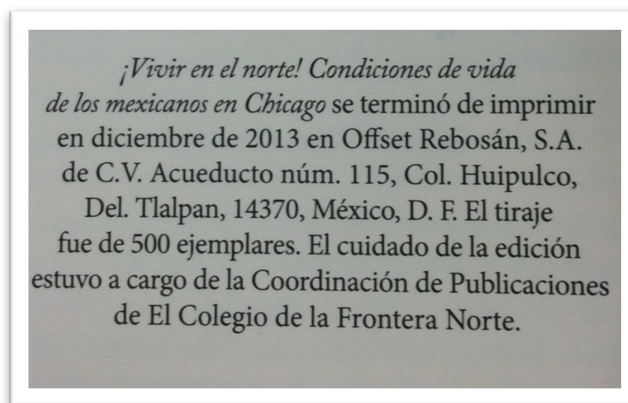


Image 3: "The print run was 500 copies."

Adan led a pre-FIL/ALA orientation webinar for all librarians about a week before the fair, and an in-person orientation for academic librarians with Lisa Johnson (Eckert College) at one of the conference hotels, the Guadalajara Plaza Ejecutivo López Mateos (many of the area hotels have similar names, so be sure to know your hotel name and address). Adan typically

does a walk-through of the Expo Guadalajara convention facility to scope vendor stand locations and possible hot items. This past year there were graphic novels about Juan Rulfo, Gabriel García Márquez, and Ernesto “Che” Guevara. A distributor can also advise you on trending areas of study and other practical advice about the book fair, so if you are working with one, you should definitely chat with them before heading to the fair.

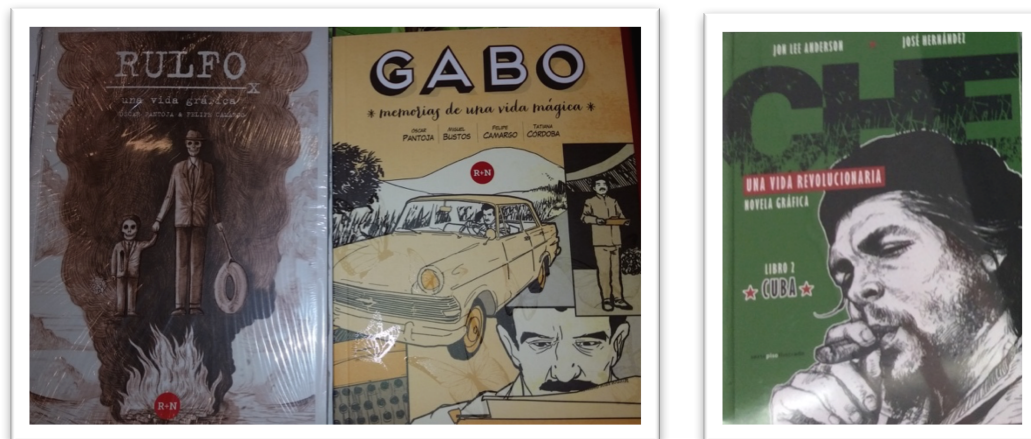


Image 4: Graphic novel covers

The pre-FIL/ALA orientation webinar covered concerns about what to expect: hotel facilities (they’re comfortable and comparable to US hotels), how to pack for the climate in Guadalajara, transportation concerns, etc. The webinar also covered how to get to know your library user community through census data and other ways. As an aside, I found using Uber in Guadalajara was the cheapest and quickest option when I was too tired to walk. I also found that I could get a TravelPassSM through Verizon for only \$2/day that gave me access to talk, text, and data in Mexico. Other phone providers may offer similar services.

Attending the in-person orientation was especially helpful since I had some publishers and areas of research in mind. Adan and Lisa knew the vendors and even the locations of some of their stalls, which helped me to plot my course through the Expo building. Adan also mentioned that some of the stalls, like UNICEF and some of the government publishers, would hand out free materials to librarians if we asked for them.

WORKING WITH A DISTRIBUTOR

As I mentioned, a distributor will purchase your selected titles and ship them to your library along with an invoice with their markup on the prices. I chose to work with Alfonso Vijiil of Libros Latinos, which has recently taken over operations of the [Latin American Book Store](#) (LABS). I worked with Alfonso because I already had an Approval Plan with LABS and knew there was the potential for receiving duplicates of the titles I selected at the FIL, so I wanted to avoid costly returns of materials. I also knew Alfonso and Linda Russo of LABS have been in the business for a long time, are themselves SALALM members, and have worked with several of my colleagues. To contract a distributor, you may want to first see if any of your established vendors offer this type of service, you can ask your professional network for recommendations, or, once you register for the FIL, you can expect to receive emails from distributors offering their services to you. You may or may not have a written agreement with a distributor about

the terms of the relationship, but you should talk to your library administration if that is a concern. Many distributors operate on a personal relationship-based honor system. Some distributors may be willing to ship your materials for you on a hybrid-DIY model, allowing you to purchase and package your own materials and save a bit of money. Be aware that packaging your own materials can be exhausting, especially if you are going to haul large amounts of them across the Expo facility floor. A public librarian will have a very different experience with a distributor than an academic librarian, so be sure to find out the typical clientele of your potential distributor.

In my case, I left piles of books at each vendor stall with my card on them and Alfonso's name written on the back. I let each vendor know that Alfonso would be coming around to pay for and pick up my books. (I'd then send a text to Alfonso so he and his team could plan to swing by certain stalls before the end of the day.) Many of them already knew him, and most seemed very at ease with the arrangement. As I mentioned, some of these books have extremely limited print runs, so if you have very specific needs, you may be able to use the [online FIL catalog](#) to identify titles that you want to purchase and call your distributor in advance to have them set aside. Some distributors prefer that you provide a list of titles to buy instead of making piles of books for them to pick up. Some even offer scanning tools to use on the barcodes of desired items (anecdotally, I heard these don't always work well). Distributors may attempt to get your titles cheaper through another channel after the FIL is over. If this is the case, you may end up getting only 50-75% of the titles you selected at the FIL because of unavailability through those other channels. Be sure to discuss this possibility with your distributor and agree upon the best way to work together and communicate while at the FIL.

ATTENDING: SHOPPING, NAVIGATING AND USING TECHNOLOGY

Each day, I would spend about 4 hours working at the fair. It's tedious and fun at the same time, but the work will drain you. Plan to use the other hours to network, sightsee, and attend professional development activities. Before leaving my hotel in the mornings, I would revisit my faculty survey results as well as the floor map of the Expo building. I made myself a list of the stalls and vendors I wanted to visit that day, based on my faculty needs and recommendations from Adan and other colleagues. I also kept a running estimate of my funds.

Because of the availability of WiFi throughout the venue, I used my iPad and Bluetooth keyboard to check WorldCat while making my selections. Upon entering a stand, I would start looking around for books that fit my library users' needs. Sometimes I would speak with the staff at the stand when there was something particular I needed or was unable to find. Then, I would make a pile of books that I was interested in. Often the staff would clear a spot for me to stand or find me a chair, and I would look them up individually. Using WorldCat, I was able to check if my library already owned the title and what other nearby libraries owned it. When I determined which items I wanted to buy according to my criteria, I would make a pile of books for Alfonso to pick up and snap a photo of it.

Your criteria for the books you select will depend upon local needs, but you may also wish to consider how your purchases will fit into the larger library landscape in the US. Watch for translations of English language materials into Spanish. They can be tricky to spot, so double-check the title pages for names of translators or ask a staff person. Note that University Presses may bring older books, like a series of classic works, so you cannot assume everything

at the fair is new. If you take an assistant (in my case, my dad), it cost \$650 Mexican Pesos (approximately \$37 USD) to pay the on-site registration for an additional person. He helped me to keep a separate handwritten list of the titles I selected at each stand, which came in useful, along with the photos of my piles of books, when reconciling invoices later.



Image 5: Me and my trustworthy Sancho Panza/dad

My SALALM colleague at SUNY-Albany, Jesús Alonso-Regalado, put together some slides titled, "[Making Book Fairs Friendlier Through Technology.](#)" I won't repeat any of the information in the slides, but I will update it: the FIL had an app by Goomeo called "FIL GDL 2015" that I found in the Play store (I don't believe there's an app for Apple users), that claimed to be the official app for FIL GDL 2015. There were additional unofficial apps. The Schedule was somewhat useful with events listed by date, but with 100+ events per day, you would have to scroll a lot. If you forgot which day Salman Rushdie was going to be there, you'd have to search for his name within the schedule for each individual day (a pre-filtered search). Maps were easy to use, but not searchable. Book Search was the catalog, but it did not seem to be comprehensive. The Exhibitors search worked within a country, so if you knew the name of a stand/vendor, but not its country, you could not find it easily (another pre-filtered search by country). The app does have a full-text search feature; but depending on the uniqueness of your search term, the results are potentially overwhelming. In the slides, Jesús provides some useful tips for preparing for technology, or lack thereof. He suggests taking a list of what your library already owns. I expected to have spotty or no Access to WiFi, so I obtained a list of all the books my library owns in Spanish into a spreadsheet and used the iPad App DocsToGo in order to read, search, and edit it. I didn't end up using it because of the availability of WiFi and access to WorldCat and my library's catalog.

The International area of the fair does not get as much traffic as the National area, so if you have to work on a non-professional day, be sure to visit the National area during professional days and save the International area for later. The International area also has a *Salón de Profesionales* or Professionals' Room with a snack bar, meeting tables for consultations with publishers and other vendors, and a secure room to store your boxes if you are preparing to ship them yourself. It's a great place to take a break. There is also a restaurant located outside the International Area near the side entrance to the facility where you can get

delicious meals of typical Mexican favorites, like *chilaquiles*. Nearby are several hotels, which also have restaurants and business centers. The most delicious snack, however, may be the *elote* that you can buy from street vendors.



Image 6: Professionals' Room table

SHIPPING MATERIALS & RETURNING TO THE US

If you feel energetic and confident in your Spanish, you may wish to make arrangements with a private shipping company. There was a PakMail shipping store located on Avenida López Mateos Sur, near my conference hotel (Guadalajara Plaza Ejecutivo López Mateos), with both DHL and FedEx services. Some of my SALALM colleagues have used similar businesses in the past to ship books back to the US; others have taken a few books and DVDs back in their suitcases (take an extra empty suitcase!). My colleagues have told me DVDs may be charged duty when shipped into the US, so it's better to put them in your suitcase if you only have a handful of them. I'm not an attorney or expert in import law, so you may also wish to contact the [U.S. Customs and Border Protection](#) at the port where you will reenter the US. I spoke on the phone with a Customs agent in Houston who told me there are limits on the retail amount of the DVDs you bring back. He said if you have around \$100-\$200 worth, you are probably well within your rights to bring them to the US with no duty, but he recommended having all invoices/receipts available when declaring your goods at Customs, and suggested carrying a letter from your institution explaining the materials are for educational purposes. He also recommended getting assistance from an independent Customs Broker, especially if you are importing larger volumes of materials. Note that even if DVDs aren't charged duty a broker will charge their own service fee and a merchandising fee. If you ship the materials yourself, a colleague warned me not to use the Mexican post, but rather FedEx Air (not Ground). If you use a ground shipping method, there's the potential for your books to be damaged at the border, where they will be opened for inspection and re-packaged. Ground shipping requires additional paperwork and is slower, but is also cheaper, especially if you are sending large quantities of materials.

My materials arrived during January, 1 ½-2 months after I was in Mexico. I worked with the Acquisitions and Cataloging departments to arrange to have the books brought to me upon arrival, so that the Spanish Program faculty could stop by and check them out during an open house. I also talked about the book fair in my instruction sessions. One of my students was

having trouble finding information about the Mexican author Jorge Volpi, and we were both surprised to find online news articles describing a talk he had given at the FIL.

The FIL is a well-attended and important cultural event in Guadalajara with lots of local, national, and international news coverage. It would have been impossible to participate in everything at the FIL, but the next time I go, I'll be even better at "book fairing" and will make more of the opportunities to learn from the abundance of authors who attend.



Image 7: Meganoticias covering the FIL

Special thanks to my SALALM colleagues Adan Griego (Stanford), Nerea Llamas (University of Michigan), Jesús Alonso-Regalado (SUNY), Melissa Gasparotto (Rutgers), Linda Russo (Latin American Book Store), and Alfonso Vijil (Libros Latinos and the Latin American Book Store). *Gracias a mi padre, Richard Maxson, por acompañarme y manejar las calles de Guadalajara en su carro alquilado.* Thanks also to Sara Lowe for reading my draft. All photos are my own.

Bronwen K. Maxson, MLIS
Humanities Librarian, Liaison to English & Spanish
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)
maxsonb@iupui.edu